

Williams: ‘Negotiations’ again a priority for Local 987 in 2024

By **DON MONCRIEF**
Editor, The Union Advocate
don.moncrief@afgelocal987.org

“Negotiations” are one of the priorities on Local 987’s radar for 2024, said AFGE Local 987 President Marion Williams, in particular their “starting up again,” he said, referring to one in particular: The Local supplement to the Master Labor Agreement. (Note: Provided notification timelines are met, he added.)

Not that negotiations weren’t part of 2023.

Williams said the Council 214 contract was negotiated during that time, with the result being: “We got everything (we were looking for).” “We worked with them,” he said. “We didn’t have a single argument going on, disagreements, we had come to an agreement prior to that, that everything was just too unstable. Let’s just work through it. If we need to make changes, let’s just find a medium.

“So, we got things we want out of it. They got some things they wanted, but we didn’t lose anything in that sense.”

The Army and Air Force

Exchange Service also had a contract negotiated, Williams said, the first since 1998. A couple of ways the Local played a key role in that, Williams said - in particular himself - was to provide the AAFES lawyer information on what the employees actually did, as well as to give feedback on submissions from the other party. “They got a lot of things negotiated,” he said. “So they have a good contract.”

The Defense Logistics Agency contract was also negotiated this past year, Williams said, but added the Local wasn’t part of that. “Even though we offered to help,” he said.

Negotiations for Nonappropriated Funds’ contract - the first since the 90s as well, Williams said - began in 2023 and is ongoing. It is, Williams said: “Looking good so far.”

Finally, he said, he thought the Defense Commissary’s contract negotiations are “coming up. So, we will have a lot of negotiations going on.”

The road less traveled

Doing the right thing

By **HENRY BROWN**
Executive VP, AFGE Local 987
henry.brown@afgelocal987.org

The dissatisfaction among Robins AFB’s employees with the promotion system, is a chasm that is as deep as the Pacific Ocean. It’s difficult to get to the bottom of the issues.

In particular, when our members see that family members, friends, religious affiliations or partners are being promoted ahead of them, even when they are more qualified, it can lead to frustration, resentment, and dissatisfaction.

There is the potential of creating a negative or toxic work environment and potentially



Henry Brown

could lead to decreased productivity and make it difficult to retain some of our best and brightest.

You might be one of the best

and brightest employee in the workplace, but you don’t get promoted. The question is why?

It could be that you lack critical skills. Or perhaps, and the term perhaps is one of tongue-in-cheek, wink, wink, but in most instances maybe even more often than we would like to think the system is flawed.

Though we would like to believe that the world truly works on the merit system and rewards top performers, there are more sinister reasons why good employees don’t get promoted.

Every organization relies heavily on the few, the great, performers to carry the load. In rare instances a few go to people

who slip through the cracks and get promoted.

However, there are far too many instances where the organization wants the high performers to remain in place, keeping pace and in most instances exceeding the expected organizational goals.

Professional dictates in a world free from a questionable system would be the right thing to do, but it just might be disruptive to upward mobility of the less-qualified and subsequently becomes less-qualified supervisors. Ask yourself: How’s that working out for you when you find yourself having to defend some of the decisions that

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IMPORTANT NOTICE



DEPARTMENT OF THE AIR FORCE
78TH AIR BASE WING (AFMC)
ROBINS AIR FORCE BASE GEORGIA

19 January 2024

78 FSS/FSCAL
375 Perry Street, Building 255
Robins AFB GA 31098-1860

Mr. Marion Williams, President
AFGE Local 987
P.O. Box 1079
Warner Robins GA 31099-1079

Dear Mr. Williams,

This is a courtesy notification regarding the Weingarten Notice- 2024 pursuant to the requirements of 5 U.S.C. §7114(a)(3) and 5 U.S.C. §7114(2)(B).

“WEINGARTEN” NOTICE – 2024

REQUIRED BY THE FEDERAL SERVICE LABOR-MANAGEMENT RELATIONS STATUTE

Pursuant to the requirements of 5 U.S.C. §7114(a)(3), this is to advise bargaining employees that: Pursuant to 5 U.S.C. §7114(2)(B), An exclusive representative of an appropriate unit in an agency shall be given the opportunity to be represented at:

- any examination of an employee in the unit by a representative of the agency in connection with an investigation if-
- (i) the employee reasonably believes that the examination may result in disciplinary action against the employee; and
- (ii) the employee requests representation.

* This right is commonly known as the “Weingarten” right and is based on the U.S. Supreme Court’s private sector labor decision in *National Labor Relations Board v. J. Weingarten, Inc.*, 420 US 251 (1975).

If you have any questions or need additional information regarding this notification, please contact the assigned labor specialist, John Ling at (478) 222-5556 or via email at john.ling@us.af.mil.

Sincerely,

//for//

William M. Vinson
Chief, Labor Relations Officer

IMPORTANT NOTICE

Local leaders attend MLK Jr. conference

By **DON MONCRIEF**
Editor, The Union Advocate
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Six from Local 987 - President Marion Williams, Executive Vice President Henry Brown, Treasurer Jeanette McElhaney, Vice President of Maintenance Greg Collins, Vice President of DLA Teresa Freeman and Trustee Tommy Gibson - attended the 2024 AFL-CIO Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. Civil and Human Rights Conference held in Montgomery, Ala., Jan. 12-14.

The event featured a number of current labor and civil rights leaders as speakers. Those



included Acting Secretary of Labor Julie Su, Sen. Laphonza Butler, former Sen. Doug Jones, Mayor of Montgomery,

Ala., Steven Reed, State Sen. Sandra Cano, State Rep. Laura Hall, State Representative, Illinois, Emanuel Welch, Hector Sanchez, Bishop Leah Daugherty among others.

“It was a good event,” Williams said. “They had a lot of speakers, (sharing) more of what they went through and how to organize unions. A lot of it dealt with the private sector. The civilian side, but (AFGE National President) Everett Kelley (introduced by District 5 National Vice President Tatishka Thomas) also spoke, talking about the challenges

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“What has changed last year was that folks were begin asked to join not just to have a strong union watching their back and to have the best member benefits of any union, but to have a voice on the job.”

- AFGE Membership and Organization Director Dave Cann

AFGE sees fastest growth rate in 13 years

By **AFGE Leadership**

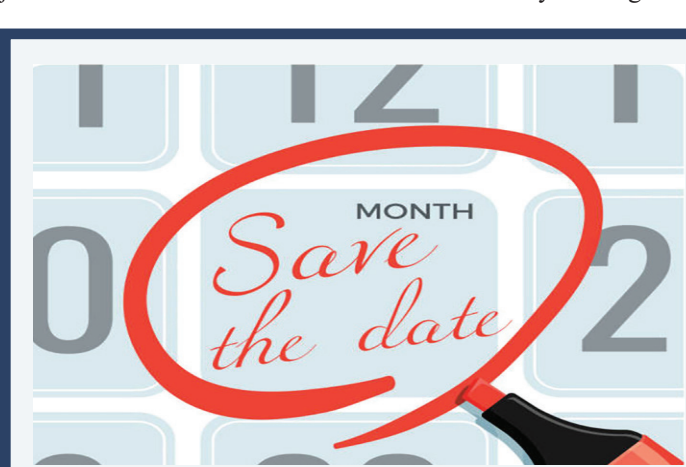
2023 was a great year for our union on the organizing front. We grew over 5 percent during the year, at our fastest rate of growth in some 13 years.

Every single district and council grew in 2023 with the National VA Council and TSA Council reaching their highest levels of membership ever - 130,158 and 22,545 respectively. Besides the 5 percent growth, our union ended December with a net increase of 1,051 despite the holidays.

We’re also adding new units of workers who have never been represented by a union, including those in Europe, and employees who went through reorganization and chose to join AFGE.

AFGE Membership and Organization Director Dave Cann said our most significant growth in 2023 was internal - people who were already eligible to join. AFGE still has the best representation in the federal sector, and member benefits have always been attractive. Neither of those have changed in 13 years.

“What has changed last year was that folks were being asked to join not just to have a strong union watching their back and to have the best member benefits of any union, but to have a voice on the job,” he explained. “People are joining AFGE in record numbers because they want workplace power -- a seat at the table when decisions about the workplace are made. That is very exciting.”



Membership meeting

Local 987 will have a membership meeting **Feb. 15 at 5 p.m. (Doors open at 4 p.m., with refreshments/available.) It will be held at Union Hall, located at 1764 Watson Blvd. (It will also be on Zoom.) As always, membership will be verified before admittance into the meeting. You can make updates to your contact information - address, phone, email - by calling Union Hall at 478-922-5758 or by emailing Linda Baxter at linda@afgelocal987.org or Jeanette McElhaney at jmac@afgelocal987.org.**

New missions, new year, new look: Robins AFB releases new official logo

By 78th Air Base Wing
Public Affairs Office

As Team Robins kicks off the new year, the base released its new official logo on January 17, which captures the essence of Robins Air Force, Georgia, and its diverse mission set. As the base entered year three of its mission transformation, it was also an opportunity to revise branded assets to visually convey the base’s mission and purpose.

In December 2021, the Air Force authorized Air Combat Command and the Georgia Air National Guard to begin the divestment of the E-8C Joint STARS fleet.

The divestment has made way for the beddown of four new missions at Robins AFB that better align with future Air Force design.

The E-8C fleet was fully divested and new missions were activated at Robins AFB during calendar year 2023.

The four new missions include the 728th Battle Management Control Squadron; 18th Airborne Command and Control Squadron, who over-



Courtesy 78th Air Base Wing Public Affairs

sees the E-11A Battlefield Airborne Communications mission; 950th Spectrum Warfare Group; and an Advanced Battle Management System Family of Systems. Click here for more information on the new missions.

The logo visually communi-

cates Robins AFB’s legacy and unity, including ties to the local community, through a clean, modern look.

The logo is for official use only. For any questions, contact the 78th Air Base Wing Public Affairs Office at 78abw.pa.office@us.af.mil.



Air Force Life Cycle Management Center’s Helicopter System Program Office equipment specialists test fit snow skis on a HH-60W at Moody Air Force Base Dec. 6, 2022. Robins Air Force Base is home to the AFLCMC Helicopter SPO, which is responsible for support, sustainment, and modification of the entire fleet of the United States Air Force’s helicopters. (U.S. Air Force photo by Russell Pry)

Robins AFB, helicopters: A duo in national defense, rescue operations

By KISHA FOSTER JOHNSON
78th Air Base Wing
Public Affairs Office

When most people think of the Air Force, airplanes and jets first come to mind.

However, there is another type of aircraft that is very important to protecting and serving our nation – they’re helicopters. And Robins Air Force Base, Georgia, is home to the Air Force Life Cycle Management Center’s Helicopter System Program Office.

“We are responsible for the sustainment and modification of the entire fleet of the United States Air Force’s helicopters,” said Chad Langston, AFLCMC Rotary Wing Branch Materiel leader. “Our aircraft numbers

are fewer compared to the other services.

“For instance, we hover around 200 helicopters while the Army has several thousand.”

The depot maintenance of United States Air Force helicopters are located at other military installations or contractor sites around the globe.

The USAF fleet includes: HH-60G/HH-60G OLR “Pave Hawk”, HH-60W “Jolly Green II, and UH-1N/TH-1H “Huey”.

The “Pave Hawks” and “Jolly Green IIs” are used to conduct day or night combat search and rescue operations into hostile environments to recover isolated personnel during war. They are also used in civil search and rescue, medical evacuation, disaster response, and humani-

tarian assistance.

“The UH-1N Hueys are used for several different scenarios, like distinguished visitors transport or nuclear armed overwatch,” said Langston. “The benefit of helicopters is the vertical lift capability to come into a hot landing zone and pull people out that need to be saved. The aircraft can also provide suppressive fire, if needed, during a rescue attempt.”

Langston said the AFLCMC Helicopter SPO has a full contingent of:

■ Engineers - To solve problems.

■ Logisticians - To make sure the warfighter has what they need where and when they need it.

See DUO, page 3

Romance scams on rise, elderly particularly vulnerable

(StatePoint) They say, “you can’t buy love,” but scammers have figured out a way to exploit it for profit.

Romance scams are at an all-time high and, while victims cross all demographics, the Federal Trade Commission reports that elders are increasingly targeted.

Why? Because they often have retirement savings at their disposal and may be more isolated and less tech savvy.

“Romance scammers often manipulate emotions to gain trust,” says Mark Kwapiszeski, head of enterprise fraud for PNC. “Those who fall victim end up putting feelings above logic. This can create embarrassment and, as a result, these crimes are less likely to be reported.”

Scammers will create convincing profiles on dating and social media apps, reaching out to their target feigning familiarity or attraction. Things move quickly, but there is always a reason they can’t meet on video or in person. They may claim to have a reason that requires them to be overseas or out of reach. They tell their target everything they want to hear, and the hook is set. Suddenly, a crisis arises that they insist they need help financial help with to mitigate. Or

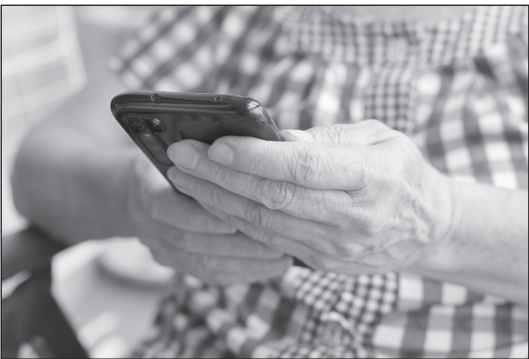


Photo source: iStock via Getty Images Plus

maybe they need finances to set up a new life together. They ask for the money, but would prefer it be sent in a form like cryptocurrency or gift card where there is little chance of the victim ever recovering it.

Such scams are highly effective. In 2022 alone, romance scams resulted in \$1.3 billion lost, more than double the money lost in the previous year, according to the FTC.

To add insult to injury, scammers may convince their target to send them revealing photos

See ROMANCE, page 3

BBB offers tips on choosing a tax preparer

The IRS recently announced that they will begin accepting 2023 tax returns Jan. 29 and the filing deadline will be April 15. If you need help with your tax preparation, now is an ideal time to ensure you’ve secured the services of a trustworthy tax professional.

For many people, major life changes, business ownership, or simply a lack of knowledge about the ever-changing tax laws make finding a reliable tax preparer a good idea. That said, not all tax preparers have the same level of experience and training. BBB offers tips for finding someone you can trust with your finances and sensitive personal information.

First, it’s important to understand the different types of tax preparers and their qualifications. Only enrolled agents, certified public accounts, and attorneys may represent their clients to the IRS on matters such as audits, collection issues, and appeals.

Enrolled Agent: An EA is a tax preparer that has been approved by the IRS to represent taxpayers. An EA must either have prior qualifying employment with the IRS or pass an intensive two-day exam on federal taxation and complete a background check.

To maintain EA status, they must complete a specified number of credit hours each year of continuing education in accounting methods and tax regulations. An EA may work independently or as part of a firm and specialize in specific areas of tax law.

An EA is a good option if you have a more complex tax situation. However, you’ll want to make sure their area of expertise applies to your personal situation. Fees and availability may vary, but you can expect an EA to charge less than a CPA.

An EA is also qualified to help you with financial planning and give you tips that could help you reduce your taxes in the future.

Certified Public Accountants: CPAs have a college degree (or the equivalent in work experience). They are licensed after passing a



Kelvin Collins

state professional qualifying exam. They are highly skilled in accounting. This makes them good candidates for complex tax planning and preparation if they are experienced in handling tax matters and enrolled in continuing education programs that keep them abreast of the constant changes to tax laws.

If your return is quite complex, a CPA may be your best choice for tax preparation, but keep in mind they will charge much more than basic tax preparers.

Attorneys: Tax attorneys often charge the highest fees as tax preparers. For taxpayers looking to shelter part of their income legally or for those who need specialized advice on municipal bonds, estate planning, and similar items, hiring a tax attorney is a good option.

Non-Credentialed tax preparers: There are about 700,000 people who work as non-credentialed tax preparers in the United States. They often work part-time or only during the tax season.

These preparers must have an active preparer tax identification number through the IRS, but beyond that, regulating tax preparers is done at the state level.

In Georgia, tax preparation professionals are required to register with the Georgia Department of Revenue through a CRF Tax Preparer Registration Form.

Most tax preparers are legitimate and competent, but it’s important to conduct a thorough interview with a tax preparer before you hire them. When it comes to choosing the right kind of tax preparer for you personally, much will depend on the complexity of your tax situation.

After you’ve decided what qualifications your tax preparer needs, the following tips will

See TAX, page 3

Medal of Honor spotlight

Marine Corps Sgt. Maj. Daniel Daly

By KATIE LANGE
DoD News

Marine Corps Sgt. Maj. Daniel Joseph Daly is the only enlisted member of the Corps to have earned the Medal of Honor twice. In fact, he’s one of only two Marines to have earned that dual distinction at all. His never-give-up attitude and fighting spirit carried him through several conflicts and are still worthy of the highest praise today.

Daly was born Nov. 11, 1873, in Brooklyn, New York, to parents John and Ellen Daly. He had a sister named Mary and a brother named David, and the family eventually moved to Glen Cove on Long Island.

According to Marine Corps University, Daly was a fighter from an early age, likely due to his small stature: he was only 5 feet 6 inches tall and weighed about 132 pounds.

As a young man, Daly spent his time working as a struggling newsboy in Manhattan before enlisting in the Marines in 1899 at the age of 26. Soon after he finished training, he was shipped to China to serve in Peking during the Boxer Rebellion.

Holding the line

By early August 1900, Daly’s unit was stationed along the Tartar Wall, which was a defensive position south of the American diplomatic compound. Toward the middle of the month, intense enemy gunfire forced them from the fortification, but then-Pvt. Daly and Capt. Newt Hall managed to crawl back onto the wall to



Photo courtesy defense.gov

Marine Corps Sgt. Maj. Daniel Daly

mount a defense.

On Aug. 14, Hall left to get reinforcements, leaving Daly by himself to hold the position. The young Marine single-handedly fended off repeated sniper attacks and about 400 soldiers who tried to storm the wall until backup arrived. His valor in action that day earned him his first Medal of Honor, which he received in December 1901.

Over his career, Daly’s service included sea duty on several ships, which took him all over the world, including to Panama, Cuba, Mexico and Puerto Rico.

In March 1911, Daly was on the USS Springfield when he managed to put out flames from gasoline that had caught fire before the general alarm could be sounded. If the fire had continued, the powder magazines on the ship could have exploded. Daly received commendations from his commanding officer and the Secretary of Navy for his quick thinking.

More acts of honor

By the summer of 1915,

a revolt in the Republic of Haiti had begun to jeopardize American lives and property, so Marine expeditionary forces were sent in to preserve order and begin “bush” warfare, as Marine historians called it. Daly was serving with the 15th Company (Mounted), 2nd Marine Regiment, and they were ordered to carry out extensive patrols into the country’s interior to seek out revolutionary fighters known as Caco bandits.

At one point, several of Daly’s comrades had been taken prisoner. He tunneled under the walls of the prison where they were being held, killed the guards and set his men free. However, what earned him a second Medal of Honor happened in October during a reconnaissance mission from Fort Liberte.

On Oct. 24, 1915, then-Gunnery Sgt. Daly and his detachment were crossing a river after dark in a deep ravine not far from Fort Dipitie when they were suddenly fired upon from three sides by about 400 Caco bandits, who had been hiding in bushes about 100 yards from the enemy-held fort. The surprised Marines retreated to higher ground and found a good position that they maintained throughout the night, despite being constantly fired upon.

At daybreak, Daly and two other Marines, then-1st Lt. Edward A. Ostermann and then-Capt. William P. Upshur, led three squads forward in different directions to surprise and scatter the Cacos.

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THE UNION ADVOCATE

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Please submit articles, photos, etc to don.moncrief@afge-local 987.org. For questions about story content, to pass on story ideas or to request coverage, please contact the aforementioned.

RIGHT

From page 1

the inept supervisors make?

The inept supervisor has been placed into a category a phenomenon commonly referred to as the Peter Principle. Essentially, it holds that every employee tends to rise one step above their level of competence. It also goes a long way towards explaining why so many supervisors are mediocre, or worse, rise above their ability to perform in the assigned capacity.

Organizations have a number of employees that are more competent and capable than the formal leader of the organization. Most employees are intimately acquainted with the fact of the boss being unable to perform in the capacity to which they are assigned. The bad thing about it is that the supervisor is only too aware of this short coming.

In most instances, the supervisor may have reached his position or rank as a result of some uncommon factor such, “nepotism”. What you can be assured of is that the supervisor is keenly aware of that potential threat to his authority by a young educated employee. They may have even evolved

into an expert at protecting their position from the most productive employees from taking their job.

As one of the most productive employees in your organization, you just might be that one person that insulates your supervisor from their own incompetence. The common response to a threat to their position is this: You can rest assured that you will be featured prominently on an unwritten hit list.

Given that the perceived productive employee is a threat to their position as a result of their known incompetence. However, there is a simultaneous stunting of the upward mobility of the most productive employees in the organization. It is an all-out assault on anyone the manager considers a threat to their position.

In the term of colloquialism, a periodic beat-down process, in which the manager is letting you know who is in charge. The least secure supervisor tends to use the appraisal system, unwarranted criticism of your communication ability as well as threatening your job.

You must meet the petulant supervisor with the courage of your conviction. You read this article with the “question”, what’s

the point of detailing all these dreary circumstances? It’s to let you know that sometimes you are just in the wrong place.

The other reason for this article is to help you to understand that you have rights in a merit system promotion process. When you are under attack on you job it may have nothing to do with you or your performance. It just might be that you are doing everything right, but you are being attacked because of the incompetence and insecurity of the managers in your chain.

People who feel entitled to a job due to nepotism resort to unprofessional behavior. You find that supervisors do not respect other people that are outside of their circle of family and friends, they are not being held accountable for their actions. Situations like these will create a lot of conflict in the organization that can affect the morale of the organization and is destructive to organization cohesion.

When a coworker who earns more despite being underqualified than those with superior experience and qualifications is a clear indication of a system that is in flux. It also illustrates poor leadership qualities. Moreover, such

situations create a less productive work place with minimal engagement. Nobody likes to work in an environment that could eventually lead to increased stress and burnout levels. When employees are continuously marginalized, undervalued and uncomfortable in the workplace typically they vote with their feet.

It is critical to address the elephant in the room in order to improve the organization’s culture. The issue with a compromised promotion system encourages a division of labor by dividing the organization in an environment that is unsustainable in a production driven environment. The most difficult aspect of addressing and resolving the issue is a clear understanding by the management chain that it is wrong and that they must resolve themselves to fixing the issue.

Addressing the issue without implementing the structure to effect change and as you address the change there must be cross feed and honest feedback to the workforce.

We should all aspire to a system of upward mobility which is consistent with skill, qualification, and performance - the bedrock of any organization.

CONFERENCE

From page 1

we have here (in AFGE).”

That – the speakers – Williams said, took care of the mornings. Following that, he said, were breakout sessions, in which you could pick which you wanted to attend, he said.

He, he continued, chose “renewable energy because it’s the fastest-growing field. AFL-CIO and AFGE are just now getting a feel for it right now,” he said. “Because it also impacts the federal government and Robins (AFB) can see that because part of the expansion for Robins was based on new power plant.

“And people see it every day and don’t realize that it’s there

for. It’s the solar panels off 247. That, he said, was one of the “biggest hurdles for the G-Ramp project; a partnership between the state of Georgia, Middle Georgia, Houston County and some others to extend the airport out for larger flights to come in.”

Some snippet quotes from the conference – courtesy of the AFL-CIO website, aflcio.org, from those aforementioned speakers are as follows:

“We are twelve days into a year, which is going to be a huge turning point for our country. And our voices are going to make the difference in how it all turns out.”

– Liz Shuler, AFL-CIO President

“I can tell you, unfortunately, story after story after

story in just my 100 days in office about how the voices of women, and in particular women of color, are missing and so needed in the halls of Congress and frankly at every level of government.”

– Butler

“John Lewis said ‘voting is the non-violent resolution.’”

– Jones

“From the closing of polling locations to the purging of our voter rolls, one thing has become clear: The fight for voting rights is as urgent today as it was decades ago.”

– Terri Sewell, U.S. Congresswoman, Alabama

“What’s going on in our country right now calls for this moment for us all to be here. Getting fired up and ready to go.”

– Welch

“Abraham said yes and birthed a nation. Moses said yes and led a people. Rahab said yes and saved a nation. Mary said yes and birthed a savior. Harriet said yes and freed a people. Malcolm and Martin said yes and changed a nation. Caesar said yes and built a movement. Wilma and Patsi said yes and gave women voice. Frederick Douglas said yes and called us to conscious. What can God do with your yes?”

– Daughtry

DUO

From page 2

- Equipment specialists - To lend their decades of hands-on helicopter maintenance experience.
- Technical data experts - To make sure crews have the information they need to maintain the helos in the field.
- Program managers - To lead modification and support acquisition efforts.
- Contracting officers - To give industry

a fair chance for companies partner with us and support the fleet.

■ Financial managers - To obtain and manage funds for it all.

“We have a team of what’s called equipment specialist who I love very much,” he said. “They are usually maintainers, retired crew chiefs who have been everywhere, done everything and have twenty or forty plus years of experience on helicopters. We send those people out with that hands-on experience and knowledge to those who need help to interpret technical data.”

In 2031, the current Hueys will be replaced with the Air Force's newest helicopter, the MH-139A Grey Wolf. It’s reported the performance capabilities closes gaps of the UH-1N in the areas of speed, range, endurance, payload and survivability.

Langston takes pride in the SPO mission. “It’s my daily motivation and is stated in my email signature block, ‘These things we do that others may live.’ That is our purpose and motto of the pararescue jumpers that go and save people around the world.”

ROMANCE

From page 2

they will later use to extort them. They may even play the long game and build trust over time, then convince their target to invest with them, without the victim ever getting any return.

“A romance scammer can invest a long time in cultivating trust, which makes these scams particularly nefarious,” Kwapiszeski says.

To protect against potential romance scams, follow these tips:

- Before sending money or sharing financial information, consult a friend or family member. Simply talking to someone not involved in the situation is often enough to identify red flags.
- Trust your gut. If something seems too good to be true, it probably is.
- Beware of “love bombing,” when a person lavishes you with excessive flattery, affection and praise early in the relationship to manipulate your emotions.
- Be wary of strangers reaching out on social media.

- If you like someone, ask for a quick video chat. If they refuse or make up outlandish excuses, that’s a red flag.
- Stay alert to photos or biographical details that don’t match up with what someone’s told you.
- Use image and name-reverse searches to validate the identity of people you meet online.
- Never send intimate photos to strangers or invest without doing your due diligence.
- Confide in family and friends if you grow suspicious. Elders have lost homes, emp-

tied out retirement accounts and risked lifetime savings for a love interest that never truly existed. Once the shock abates and the money is gone, the shame sets in and some have even resorted to self-harm instead of admitting to being defrauded in this way.

If a loved one falls victim to a romance scam, it’s important to respond with empathy.

The best line of defense against romance scams is awareness. Understanding common tactics can help you stay protected.

TAX

From page 2

help you choose someone who is trustworthy and competent:

Review the tax preparer’s credentials. EAs, CPAs, and tax attorneys are all qualified to represent their clients to the IRS on all matters.

Other preparers can help you with forms and basic matters but cannot represent you in case of an audit. Don’t be afraid to ask about these or other qualifications before you hire someone.

Be wary of spectacular promises. If a tax preparer promises you larger refunds than

the competition, this is a red flag. Many such tax preparers base their fees on the amount of your return and may be likely to use questionable tax preparation tactics. In addition, it’s wise to avoid tax preparers who offer “refund anticipation loans” as you’ll probably lose a large percentage of your return to commission fees.

Get referrals from friends and family. One of the best ways to find a trustworthy tax preparer is to ask your family and friends for recommendations. Once you have a few options, check BBB.org, paying careful attention to other consumers’ reviews or complaint details. This will give you a clear view of what you can expect.

You can also find a BBB Accredited tax

preparer near you on bbb.org.

Think about availability. If the IRS finds errors in your tax forms or decides to perform an audit, will your tax preparer be available to help you with the details? Find out whether you can contact the tax preparer all year long or only during tax season.

Ask about fees ahead of time. Before you agree to any services, read the contracts carefully and understand how much the tax preparer charges for their services. Ask about extra fees for e-filing state, federal, and local returns, as well as fees for any unexpected complications.

For additional information, please check BBB’s Tax Tips and Resources.

HONOR

From page 2

Their effort worked, and it was instrumental in capturing Fort Dipitie. Daly, Ostermann and Upshur all earned the Medal of Honor for their actions that day.

The valor continues

Daly remained in the military through World War I, serving in the American Expeditionary Forces in France from November 1917 to late April 1919. He was injured twice while fighting in several major campaigns, including the bloody Battle of Belleau Wood in June 1918. During that fight, he put out a fire at an ammo

dump that could have caused a disastrous explosion. Then, a few days later, he attacked and captured an enemy machine gun emplacement all by himself before rescuing several wounded comrades while under fire.

At Belleau Wood, when his Marines were outnumbered, outgunned and pinned down, the then-1st sergeant famously ordered an attack and leapt forward, shouting this battle cry to his beleaguered men: “Come on, you sons of bitches. Do you want to live forever?”

Daly’s tenacity helped lead the Marines to clear the woods and win the battle for Allied forces. His actions earned him the Army

Distinguished Service Cross and the Navy Cross. From the French Government, he also received the Medaille Militaire, the Croix de Guerre with Palm and the French Victory Medal with four clasps.

When the war ended, Daly served with American occupation forces in Germany.

Daly remained on active duty until September 1919, when he transferred to the Fleet Marine Corps Reserve. He then took a job on Wall Street as a bank guard, a position he held for 17 years. Daly officially retired from the Marine Corps on Feb. 6, 1929, and was advanced to the rank of sergeant major.

Daly is buried in Cypress Hills National Cemetery in Brooklyn. Both of his Medals of Honor are housed at the National Museum of the U.S. Marine Corps in Quantico, Virginia.

In March 1943, the Navy commissioned the USS Daly in his honor. The ship was christened by his niece. Daly continues to be known as one of the most decorated men to serve as a Marine. Nicknamed “Devil Dog” by many of his compatriots, he was described by famed counterpart Maj. Gen. Smedley Butler — the only other Marine Corps double Medal of Honor recipient — as “the fightingest man ever to serve with the Marine Corps.”

Equal Employment Opportunity Commission

Actions/decisions:

Scripps Clinical Medical Group to pay \$6.875 million

Scripps Clinical Medical Group has settled an age and disability discrimination charge filed with the U.S. Equal Employment Opportunity Commission after it subjected a class of physicians to a mandatory retirement age, regardless of the individuals’ abilities to do the job, the federal agency announced recently.

The EEOC investigated the allegations and found reasonable cause to believe that Scripps Clinical Medical Group violated the Age Discrimination in Employment Act and the Americans with Disabilities Act.

Without admitting liability, Scripps Clinical Medical Group has entered into a four-year conciliation agreement with the EEOC. According to the agreement, the company will provide \$6,875,000 to a class of individuals impacted by the company’s mandatory retirement age policy. Additionally, Scripps has rescinded its mandatory retirement policy based on age and its Board of Directors will reaffirm this rescission.

The medical group has further agreed to review, revise as necessary, and distribute its policies and procedures against discrimination based on age and disability. It will also require Scripps’ division heads, department heads, executive leadership, and members of human resources to attend training on the ADEA and ADA.

School pays \$85,000 to settle discrimination lawsuit

Chesapeake Montessori Foundation, Inc., operator of the Chesapeake Montessori School in Annapolis, Maryland, will pay over \$85,000 to a former teacher to resolve a disability discrimination lawsuit filed by the U.S. Equal Employment Opportunity Commission, the federal agency announced recently.

According to the EEOC’s lawsuit, in 2021 Chesapeake Montessori decided not to renew a longtime teacher’s contract because it assumed that her daughter’s disability, coupled with the COVID pandemic, would undermine the teacher’s focus and commitment to her job. The school elected to instead renew the contract of other teachers with less experience and tenure.

Such alleged conduct violates the Americans with Disabilities Act, which prohibits discriminating against any employee because of their relationship or association with a person with a disability.

In addition to the monetary relief paid to the teacher named in the suit, the consent decree resolving the litigation prohibits future disability discrimination, including based on an association with a disabled person, and requires Chesapeake Montessori to implement non-discrimination policies; training for human resources and management officials; notices to employees about their rights; and compliance monitoring and reporting.

Court awards over \$80,000 against drilling/well service

The U.S. Equal Employment Opportunity Commission has won a victory in federal court in Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania, in its employment discrimination lawsuit against Coastal Drilling East, LLC and Coastal Well Service, LLC, the federal agency announced recently.

The EEOC originally filed the racial harassment case against Coastal Drilling East, LLC (Coastal Drilling), a Pennsylvania-based company that provides geotechnical construction services in the oil and natural gas industry, on Sept. 13, 2021. According to the lawsuit, a Black employee at Coastal Drilling’s Graysville, Pennsylvania, site was subjected to severe racial harassment by his coworkers, including being handed a noose, open display of nooses on other occasions, and persistent use of racial epithets such as “n****r” in reference to himself and other Black persons. A direct supervisor tolerated and participated in some of the racial harassment, the EEOC said. Coastal Drilling was aware of the racial harassment in its workplace but failed to take action to stop it from occurring, eventually forcing the Black worker to resign his employment, the EEOC charged.

Such conduct violates Title VII of the Civil Rights Act of 1964, which prohibits racial harassment and forced resignation from employment because of race.

Corning to pay \$120,000 to settle sex discrimination case

Corning Incorporated will pay \$120,000 and furnish other relief to settle a sex discrimination lawsuit brought by the U.S. Equal Employment Opportunity Commission, the federal agency announced recently.

According to the EEOC’s lawsuit, Corning violated federal law by failing to promote female “process assistants” (machine operators) at its Sullivan Park and Big Flats locations in southern central New York.

The EEOC alleged that, at its Sullivan Park and Big Flats locations, Corning groomed male process assistants for advancement, provided them with greater training opportunities, and bent its own eligibility rules to place them in line lead positions instead of similarly or more qualified women.

Such alleged conduct violates Title VII of the Civil Rights Act of 1964, which prohibits employers from discriminating based on sex.

In addition to the monetary relief, the three-year consent decree resolving the suit requires Corning to provide enhanced anti-discrimination training, with a focus on hiring; revise its equal employment opportunity policies; modify its line lead hiring processes; and receive and investigate complaints of discrimination and retaliation and report the same to the EEOC.

United Labor to pay \$32,371 to settle disability suit

The United Labor Agency (ULA), a Cleveland-based non-profit that focuses on workforce development, will pay \$32,371 to settle a disability discrimination lawsuit filed by the U.S. Equal Employment Opportunity Commission, the federal agency announced recently.

According to the EEOC’s lawsuit, ULA discriminated against a long-time employee based on her disability, breast cancer, when it denied her reasonable accommodation request for temporary remote work and subjected her to intolerable work conditions that resulted in her discharge. ULA required its employees to return to in-person work after a long period of COVID-related telework and denied the employee’s request to remain on telework for several months while she was undergoing radiation treatments and was immunosuppressed. The employee returned to the office per ULA’s demands, but eventually felt forced to resign due to the risk of COVID-19 exposure.

The alleged conduct violated the Americans with Disabilities Act, which requires employers to provide reasonable accommodations to employees with disabilities if doing so would not pose an undue hardship.

How to protect your family from tornadoes

(Family Features)

When clouds loom overhead and winds pick up in your area, it's crucial to keep an eye on the sky and an ear toward local news broadcasts. Capable of destroying buildings, uprooting trees and sending dangerous debris flying, tornadoes are rotating columns of air that extend from the base of thunderstorms to the ground. With the potential to reach wind speeds of up to 300 miles per hour, these violent storms can wreak havoc on communities and put families in danger. Keep your loved ones safe with these tips to prepare for and shelter from tornadoes.

Pay Attention to weather forecasts

Staying weather alert is always a good idea, particularly as strong thunderstorms build and approach your location. Check the forecast regularly to understand the risk for severe weather and, if possible, sign up for smartphone alerts or notifications.

Put a plan in place

Each member of your family should understand what to do in an emergency situation. Create a plan that includes where to shelter in the event of a tornado warning. Typically, this is a basement, storm cellar or interior room on the lowest floor of the home with no windows. If you have a safe room or storm shelter, which is a hardened structure designed to provide near-absolute protection in extreme weather events like tornadoes and hurricanes, this is the time to utilize it. Clearly define who is expected to gather emergency materials, such as flashlights, blankets, a first-aid kit and extra food and water.

Understand watches vs. warnings

Key phrases from sources like the National Weather Service include "tornado watch" and "tornado warning." Make sure you understand the differences to react appropriately.

- **Tornado Watch:** Tornadoes are possible in or near your location. Review emergency plans with loved ones and be ready to act quickly if a warning is issued.
- **Tornado Warning:** A tornado is active according to sightings or weather radar. It's time to take action and follow your family's safety plan.

Build with resistant materials

If constructing a new home is on the horizon, consider the benefits of building with durable materials like insulated concrete forms (ICFs), which are a more resilient alternative to wood framing. For areas prone to natural disasters, ICF walls from Nudura provide superior strength to withstand extreme wind and impact damage from tornadoes and hurricanes. They also protect against wildfires due to a fire protection rating of up to four hours, compared to 45 minutes for wood framing, and provide greater comfort, durability and lower life cycle costs compared to wood structures.

Shelter safely

When a tornado warning is in effect, acting quickly is crucial. If at home, head to the basement, safe room or interior room away from windows and, if possible, stay tuned to local news for updates. At school or the workplace, follow the guidelines in place from tornado drills and proceed calmly but quickly to the shelter location. If driving and unable to get to shelter, pull over and get down in your vehicle with your head covered or leave your car and seek shelter in a low-lying ditch or ravine. Find more ways to protect your family from natural disasters at nudura.com/tornado-prep.



Photo courtesy of Shutterstock

5 ways to support underappreciated professionals

(Family Features)

Unsung heroes make everyday living possible. They work behind the scenes and tackle some of the most demanding work imaginable, such as maintaining facilities and keeping them in tip-top condition. You can show your appreciation for deserving workers such as your favorite school custodians or office maintenance staff members in numerous ways, including these suggestions from Rubbermaid Commercial Products, supporters of cleaning and maintenance professionals nationwide.

Write thank you notes

In today's digital world, handwritten notes are a novelty. The times may be changing, but the impression a thoughtful handwritten message leaves behind hasn't changed at all. Keep a supply of blank notecards so you can offer notes to those who make a difference in your life. The sentiments don't need to be long; a simple expression of gratitude is enough to brighten someone's day.

Participate in appreciation events

You might receive information from local schools or businesses about opportunities to support maintenance staff, such as hosting meals or helping with cleanup in classrooms or offices. arrive for work each day. The campaign includes more than 40 events globally where community members can engage with and personally thank custodians who are making an everyday difference behind the scenes.

Recognize milestones

Often, those in custodial roles blend into the fabric of everyday life. They're rarely the focal point of celebrations, but often make it possible for others to honor special occasions. Make a point to know about the underappreciated professionals in your life, so you can recognize events like birthdays, work anniversaries and other dates that hold special personal meaning.

Do your part

Think about what small steps you can take to make unsung heroes' jobs easier. That might mean picking up after yourself or cleaning up a mess in your workspace. It could involve wiping down your table after lunch. Little gestures can add up to a big difference.

Lead by example

You don't need to wait for others to join you in recognizing workers whose impacts are made behind the scenes. Speaking up and taking action can serve as a positive example for those around you. You can even take the lead and organize an effort to recognize individuals who rarely receive thanks, such as the custodian at your office or the janitorial team at your favorite retailer.



Photo courtesy of Shutterstock

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STEP 2:

Select your Agency and Local Number

STEP 3:

Fill out the one-page membership form and click "Join"

STEP 4:

If you're a new member, select a rebate campaign and fill out the brief form (local participation may vary)

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Fill in the blank squares in the grid, making sure that every row, column and 3-by-3 box includes all digits 1 through 9.

What is Bruce Wayne's favorite food? **Goth Ham**

Have you heard about the controversial new sunglasses? They're extremely polarizing.

Fish

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A little humor ...

The new minister stood at the church door, greeting the members as they left the Sunday morning service. Most of the people graciously told the new minister how they liked his message. But one man said, "That was a very dull and boring sermon, Pastor." In a few minutes the same man appeared again in line and said, "I don't think you

did any preparation for your message, Pastor." Once again, the man appeared, this time muttering, "You really blew it. You didn't have a thing to say, Pastor." Finally the minister could stand it no longer. He went over to one of the deacons and inquired about the man. "Oh, don't let that guy bother you," said the deacon. "He

STATEPOINT CROSSWORD

THEME: THE GRAMMYS

ACROSS

- Moonshine maker
- *Artist with most 2024 Grammy nominations
- Not his
- "Roots" author
- That guy
- Full of emotion (2 words)
- Relating to #3 Down
- Tarzan's mom, e.g.
- Caribbean island destination
- *The Recording _____, voting organization
- ***What Was I Made For?" movie
- ***A Boy Named _____, 1970 Grammy winner
- Prickle on a wire
- Drench
- Waiter's handout
- *Grammy-nominated Lauper song, "True _____"
- Amusement destination
- Rachel Renee Russell's "_____ Diaries"
- Extend subscription
- South Korean boy band
- Type of wrap
- Italian wine region
- Forearm length unit
- Honey-producing facility
- Saw incision
- Nauseant
- Fancy marbles used as shooters
- U.S. Marine Corps gift recipient
- EU currency
- Aglet on a shoelace, e.g.
- *____.com Arena
- *Miley Cyrus' Song of the Year nominee and popular romantic gift
- Texas cook-off dish
- ***In the _____ Tonight," by Grammy-winner Phil Collins
- Send, as payment
- Safe place
- Bird word
- Leave out

- Bookkeeping entry
- Refrigerator sound
- Scatter

DOWN

- Not Sunni
- Baby powder ingredient
- Pelvic parts
- Shows the way
- Aristotle's school
- One-horse carriage
- Mailing "code"
- Single-cell protozoan
- *Grammy-winner, _____ Alpert
- *Purse for the red carpet
- Bumpkin
- Pampering place
- Bar _____, ME
- Rewards, in the olden days
- Pendulum's path
- Cantina staple
- *Ice _____, Best New Artist nominee
- Wooden ship caulking
- Space exploration mission
- *Grammy host for the fourth time
- Plumbing problem
- Early stages of illness
- Reminiscent of the past
- ***"Anti-Hero" performer
- Not purl
- Pacific Islanders' herbal drink
- Handrail post
- Neckwear decoration
- Use scissors
- Soft palate vibrations
- House pest
- Resided
- Social media conversation
- Bank of Paris
- Big Bang's original matter
- Word on a gift tag
- Arabian bigwig
- Fair attraction
- Hot pot
- Denoted by symbol X
- Debtor's letters



CROSSWORD

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STR8TS

No. 672

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Previous solution - Medium

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How to beat STR8TS – Like Sudoku, no single number can repeat in any row or column. But... rows and columns are divided by black squares into compartments. These need to be filled in with numbers that complete a 'straight'. A straight is a set of numbers with no gaps but can be in any order, eg [4,2,3,5]. Clues in black cells remove that number as an option in that row and column, and are not part of any straight. Glance at the solution to see how 'straights' are formed.

man's house and said, "Joe, what would you do if you inherited a million dollars?" Joe responded, "Well, Pastor, I think I would give half of it to the church." The minister fell over dead.

Mother's Day brings back memories of maternal advice and admonition. Picture the scene with these famous off-spring:

- Alexander the Great's mother: "How many times do I have to tell you—you can't have everything you want in this world!"
- Franz Schubert's mother: "Take my advice, son. Never start anything you can't finish."
- Achilles's mother: "Stop imagining things. There's nothing wrong with your heel."
- Madame de Pompadour's mother: "For heaven's sake, child, do something about your hair!"
- Sigmund Freud's mother: "Stop pestering me! I've told you a hundred times the stork brought you!"

A young man had a job with a company that required him to work very late at night. In going home, he found that it was fastest to walk through a

cemetery near his home.

One night when he was very tired, he accidentally fell into a freshly dug grave. At first he was not too concerned, but when he realized that he could not get out because the hole was too deep, he became somewhat hysterical.

Finally, in complete exhaustion, he sat down in the corner of the grave and fell asleep.

Shortly thereafter another man decided to walk through the cemetery and happened to fall into the same grave.

He too went through great effort to get out but could not. He then moved around the grave until he stepped on the first man who was asleep. The first man woke up and shouted, "You can't get out of here!" But the second man did.

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5 easy ways to say ‘I love you’

(Family Features)

1. If gift-giving isn't your strong suit, occasions like Valentine's Day are likely to bring on stress and worry, but procrastinating will only serve to elevate your unease. Follow these steps to simplify your shopping, and while you may not come to love the task of finding the perfect gift, your loved one will undoubtedly appreciate your effort.

2. Browse for ideas online. Many retailers offer special promotions and gift idea sections on their websites, so finding inspiration can be as easy as visiting the sites of your loved one's favorite stores. There are also dozens of articles online to help get the ideas flowing. Searches such as "gifts for horse lovers" or "Valentine's gifts for a new boyfriend" will reveal a long list of ideas to peruse.

3. Keep it simple. Although the advertising industry works hard to convince consumers otherwise, Valentine's Day isn't really all about the bling. Sure, a pretty bauble is a welcome gift, but there are plenty of ways to show your affection that don't require spending a month's salary. A heartfelt card paired with a memento of a meaningful event or place in your relationship sends the same loving sentiment.

4. Make it a (different) date. For many couples, navigating the demands of work, kids and life make spending time together a luxury. Instead of fighting crowds at busy restaurants on the official date, celebrate your love on a day of your own choosing, when you can relax and enjoy the time together without the pressure to rush through dessert so your table can be flipped for the next waiting couple.

5. Give blooms a boost. A dozen long-stem red roses is a beautiful gesture, but unless your intended rose receiver is a strictly traditional type, try adding a little spice to your floral arrangement. Go for a bouquet in her favorite color, or have the flowers arranged in a practical vessel she can reuse to remember the occasion, such as a cocktail shaker or a watering can.

Go ahead, gift yourself. It may seem counter-intuitive, but finding a gift you'll enjoy may inspire an idea for your loved one. The trick is finding something you can share together, whether it's tickets to a show or his and hers mugs for enjoying your favorite brew.

Just be sure your intended will share your enthusiasm for, or you may as well go buy a blender.



Photo courtesy of Getty Images

YOUNG

Young Organizing Unionists for the Next Generation

The AFGE Young Organizing Unionists for the Next Generation program seeks to mobilize young union members to become leaders and activists for social change within AFGE and the Labor Movement.

AFGE members who are under the age of 40 and those mentors that are over 40 will work together to include younger workers into the union structure and keep them engaged in what's at stake for working class Americans.

AFGE YOUNG intends to provide young members with networking opportunities and resources to engage in mobilizing other young workers into AFGE, union training to promote leadership skills, innovative social gatherings, AFGE conference meetings, and other engaging events. In doing so, AFGE YOUNG participants work to build lasting labor solidarity, advance issues of social and economic justice, and find more inclusive ways to engage the current and future generations in the Labor Movement.

For more information, or to get involved at the Local 987 level, contact Brandon Respress at brandon.respress@afgelocal987.org.



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